



Bilbyboy and the Pixies.

Having explained another story how Smoky Crossroads lies between Maybottle and Winkville, how Bilbyboy, his dachshund, Donnerwetter and the rest of the folks used to meet on the porch of the general store and post office, kept by Squire Bear, and talk over matters or listen to Brer Rabbit's verses, it is not surprising that one evening, when they were all there, Bilbyboy, who was somewhat given to asking questions, suddenly asked:

"Are there such things as Pixies, squire?"

Squire Bear winked and blinked, scratched his head, turned to Brer Rabbit and asked in turn, "How about that?"

"That reminds me of some verses of

down the mossy slide to the glen."

So it was agreed they should all meet at the store Saturday evening and start on the trip—that is, all except Brer Terrapin, who said:

"As for me, brothers, skipping through the country with a whole lot of giddy folks on a frolic makes me dizzy; so, as I've got a big job of thinging on hand to do, I'll start ahead and meet you at the top of Mossy Slide."

At this the others nudged each other and winked, but did not care to hurt his feelings by talking about his slow movements.

Well, about the time on Saturday evening when the grasshoppers and locusts pass the word to the crickets and katydids to pipe up and carry the time along, and old man bilfrock clears his throat to see if he's caught more cold, they met and started on their trip, Bilbyboy, Donnerwetter, Squire

lack of cold, it was like a storm of snow and sleet, while through it all the pipping Pixie voices sang:

"A welcome to the strangers, we're very glad to see them, we hope their prying eyes will enjoy this nice surprise: This is the milkweed floss, cockle burrs, burrs, burrs."

When the shower had gradually stopped, and they had about blown the fuff out of their mouths and noses, and were looking at the cockle burrs out of their eyebrows and coats, they heard Brer Terrapin remark with a chuckle as he poked his head out of his shell: "I've been thinking, folks, that there are times when a tortoise shell overcoat with a trap for the face is better than a fur one," and he chuckled again as he pulled his trap door down and they saw that the Pixies were scrambling down and out from everywhere, each claiming a "horse" themselves running around in a circle with two or more Pixies astride of each.

The little fellows held on by the hair with one hand, while they urged their mounts on with cat-tail rushes which they held in the other. Bilbyboy had one on each shoulder and Donnerwetter had one facing forward and holding on by the ears, and another backward holding on by the tail. Brer Terrapin alone escaped, which he explained by saying:

"You see, I'd like to have joined in the fun, but as some one had to be judge of the races, and that takes a thoughtful man, why, I thought I'd just look on." And off they were, and in a twinkling they were gone, that perhaps he wasn't much on fast running.

Pretty soon they all grew tired of the sudden and so they decided to rest, while the Pixie King asked the Squire what the occasion of the visit was.

"Well, you see it's this way," he replied as well as his short breath would let him. "Of course we folks at the crossroads know you quite well (at which some of them snickered), but as we've adopted Bilbyboy and Donnerwetter and they wanted to make your acquaintance, we thought we'd all come along."

"You're kind of you, and I'm sure you're welcome," said the king, "but what do you call that thing with the long body, long ears, long name and short legs?"

"That's the latest style of dog from Germany, and his name is German for Thunderweather, though he's really very quiet."

"He's a good dog," said the king, "the king gravely asked of Bilbyboy, and Donnerwetter, who was a very modest dog, felt that the bright eyes of the Pixie band as they turned on him were like a host of fireflies that almost burnt him."

"I don't know," answered the boy; "they said they got the longest they could, but I've heard they were longer."

"Too bad, too bad," said the king; "they should have got you the longest while they were about it. Take him to the queen."

"I added, turning to the others, that which some grabbed him by the ears and others by the tail, and a tug of war commenced which was amusing to all except the dog and Bilbyboy, who were both crying."

"Oh, please don't hurt him!"

"Don't worry," said the king between his teeth, "he's a good dog, but he's a little bit of a trouble maker."

To tell all that happened from that time until they started on their journey, would fill a book. Under the direction of the queen they played all sorts of woodland games and pranks, but not as roughly as they had before, and they made a wood thrush that must have been dreaming pleasant dreams.

"They were startled by the voice of Brer Terrapin saying, 'Well, folks, you all seem to have found something to think about at last. Why, if I had my gun and a bag full of this time.'

Laughing and peering around, they found him leaning back against a flat rock between two boulders.

"Have you seen the oogle man?" the squire asked.

"Just so, quite so," was the answer.

"Did he give you the witch hazel nuts?"

"Quite so, quite so," was the answer.

"Then pass them around," said the squire.

And after they had each eaten one, the next thing Bilbyboy knew they were all going down the slide, and as they slid standing up, and as it was a long and slippery slide, he found it very exciting, especially as when they reached the bottom each had to make a leap frog jump over Squire Bear, who, starting first, had stopped short, ducked his head and put his hands on his knees; that is, all except Brer Terrapin, who gravely walked through his legs, saying he'd forgotten to bring along his bottle of limber-limb-oil made out of willow sap and birch gum, so they'd have to excuse him.

There was no time to answer, however, for just then, from every crack and cranny, hole and hollow, hill and hummock, came a shower of cockle burrs, thistle-down and a host of other things, that, except for the

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"Put the eyes out of needles and well. Eat nuts without breaking a shell. They turn the milk thick. Drive fish from your chair. And it ain't wise to go where they dwell."

"Once they boxed all the ears of my corn. Put dough in my wife's dinner horn. They turn the milk thick. Drive fish from your chair. And it ain't wise to go where they dwell."

"And what do you think? Patched clothes that had never been worn! They turn the milk thick. Drive fish from your chair. And it ain't wise to go where they dwell."

"They poked my pants red, white and blue in a place that was plain to the eye. Though the pants were left green. Which is hard to see. When you're gathering things for a stew."

At this the others interrupted with a hearty laugh, and Squire Bear said:

"Just so! Just so! They surely are a tricky lot. Why, one time they made all my yardsticks left-handed, all my needles crossed-eyed and turned my money into mud-lage, so I had to sleep with my mouth open, fearing if I closed it it would stay closed."

"Well," said Bilbyboy, "there must be lots of fun in them, at any rate. Won't some of you take me to see them?"

Squire Bear took his pipe out of his mouth, blew a long ribbon of smoke and answered slowly:

"Well, I dunno—still, if the oogle man says it's all right, and the other folks will go, why—"

"The who?" exclaimed Bilbyboy. At which they all laughed softly, and Brer Fox said:

"Brer Cottontail, you'll have to explain who the oogle man is, or our little friend will die of curiosity." So the rabbit explained as follows:

"He tells of the weather and things To folks who wear fur or have wings; What herbs are good and what bad; Where the best kind of food is to be had; When it's time to go south or north; When it's time to stay in the north; But he don't like to waste any words. On folks who trap beasts or shoot birds."

"But I don't do either!" exclaimed Bilbyboy as he finished.

"Just so! Just so!" assented the squire. "And as I was going to say, if the folks will make up a party and the oogle man says it's all right, we might pay them a visit. You know the shortest way, don't you, Brer Ringtail?"

Brer Coon answered, "Sure, squire; the best way is up Moonshine Hill and then

down the mossy slide to the glen."

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At this the others nudged each other and winked, but did not care to hurt his feelings by talking about his slow movements.

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"You see, I'd like to have joined in the fun, but as some one had to be judge of the races, and that takes a thoughtful man, why, I thought I'd just look on." And off they were, and in a twinkling they were gone, that perhaps he wasn't much on fast running.

Pretty soon they all grew tired of the sudden and so they decided to rest, while the Pixie King asked the Squire what the occasion of the visit was.

"Well, you see it's this way," he replied as well as his short breath would let him. "Of course we folks at the crossroads know you quite well (at which some of them snickered), but as we've adopted Bilbyboy and Donnerwetter and they wanted to make your acquaintance, we thought we'd all come along."

"You're kind of you, and I'm sure you're welcome," said the king, "but what do you call that thing with the long body, long ears, long name and short legs?"

"That's the latest style of dog from Germany, and his name is German for Thunderweather, though he's really very quiet."

"He's a good dog," said the king, "the king gravely asked of Bilbyboy, and Donnerwetter, who was a very modest dog, felt that the bright eyes of the Pixie band as they turned on him were like a host of fireflies that almost burnt him."

"I don't know," answered the boy; "they said they got the longest they could, but I've heard they were longer."

"Too bad, too bad," said the king; "they should have got you the longest while they were about it. Take him to the queen."

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